RURAL SOCIOLOGY *and* RURAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

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PREFACE

Twenty-five years have passed since I prepared my first course in Rural Sociology, which dealt chiefly with rural social problems. About twenty years ago I was requested to write a textbook on rural sociology, but I declined on the ground that I had nothing essentially new to say on the subject. Meanwhile a dozen or more textbooks on the subject have been issued and I have hesitated to add to their number, but am now doing so for use in my own classes and with the hope that I may bring a new interpretation to the subject as a whole and to many of the topics treated.

My views with regard to the distinction between Rural Sociology as a science and Rural Social Organization as a technology are set forth in Chapter 2, and the argument need not be repeated here. This distinction forms the basis of my analysis, and in most of the chapters in Part III the structure and functions of the groups or institutions from the standpoint of sociology are described in the first part; the practical problems of rural social organization are discussed in the second part of each chapter. The sociological analysis is confessedly sketchy because of lack of careful monographic studies of the various groups and institutions involved, but is given in the hope that it will point out the need for intensive research on them by rural sociologists in the future. It is my belief that rural sociology will not be able to make the contribution to rural social organization which it should unless it pursues a strictly scientific method and creates new knowledge concerning its phenomena, through a more scientific analysis of their elements; and, on the other hand, that rural sociologists cannot assume sole responsibility for rural social organization, but must realize that their role is to utilize the findings of rural sociology *and* to aid in the integration of the findings of other disciplines and in promoting teamwork among their specialists in working out programs of rural social organization, in whatever plane or area it is involved.

This book deals mostly with social structure, because the student must have a knowledge of the nature of the phenomena before he can think intelligently concerning their processes or qualities. It is a matter of regret that there is not more consideration of the socio-psychological aspects of the subject, but this is done deliberately because we do not,

as yet, have a great quantity of empirical data in this field, and because the principles involved apply to all the social structures of rural life and really require a separate treatment, a textbook on rural social psychology, to supplement the material of this book.

The book has been written for those who have had no sociology as well as for those who have had an introductory course in general sociology, because most classes in this subject include both. There has been a most desirable increase in the number of the latter, and this increase should be encouraged.

It may be felt that there is too much theory in Part I, but there is no short cut to a knowledge of so complex a subject. The student must have a fundamental knowledge of the theory involved and there is no way to make an abstract subject easy.

The teacher should be warned that there is more material in the book than can be used in the usual three-hour college course. He will, therefore, need to omit some chapters and cover their main points in his lectures, and merely use them for reference. Too much time should not be spent on the chapters in Part I following Chapter 1; not more than enough to permit the student to get the chief points as a background. Parts II and III contain the vital material and will be found more interesting to the student.

The community studies presented in the Appendix and referred to in Chapter 1 are given for the benefit of those students who are not familiar with rural life, as well as for those who have been reared in a rural environment but have not analyzed its social structure. These studies are given just as prepared by the students. The preparation of such community descriptions is one of the best methods of making students think concretely about a situation with which they are intimately acquainted, and of revealing to them what they do not know about it. The teacher should supplement the text by the use of illustrative material of local significance and by the assignment of reference reading. Many quotations in the original manuscript have been omitted to keep the book within a practical size. They are cited in the footnotes and the teacher should familiarize himself with them, particularly those marked "Consult" (or *Cf.*).

The usual list of topics for discussion and exercises, usually given in textbooks of this sort for each chapter, is omitted from the conviction that it is the function of the teacher to outline such as may be most pertinent to the environment of the students, the method of handling the course, and the type of students involved. Such discussion topics are soon out of date and are not equally applicable to various types of institutions.

The first half of this book was written in 1939 and 1940. Data from the 1940 Census which were available at time of going to press have been included, but it has not been feasible to bring the statistics of various governmental administrations up to date.

This book has been written in the hope that it may be a contribution to the better understanding of Rural Sociology by its growing number of students. So far Rural Sociology has been building only its foundations. It is important that they be sound and enduring, for the time is now ripe for erecting a larger superstructure upon them. Rural Sociology is already confronted with the need of a much more exact and fundamental analysis of its phenomena if it is to meet the growing demands being made upon it.

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Part I

Introduction: Scope and Aims in the Study of Rural Society

Rural sociology and rural social organization are relatively new fields of scientific study. Like all fields of science they seek to give a clearer understanding of certain phenomena by methods of analysis which reveal relationships not apparent to the casual observations of the layman. They are delimited from other sciences by the subject matter—the phenomena—and by the point of view from which they approach these phenomena.

This introductory section describes the phenomena of rural society with which we are concerned and delimits the field of our inquiry.

In Chapter 1 we look first at the ways in which rural folk associate in the same manner as a naturalist observes association in the animal world, in the attempt to establish a naturalistic or objective attitude or point of view. (In the Appendix an analysis of the social organization of several rural communities is undertaken to familiarize the student with the types of phenomena he is to study, in terms of definite communities described by students well acquainted with them.)

Having become acquainted with the phenomena of rural society with which we are concerned, we proceed to Chapter 2 which describes the aims and objectives of Rural Sociology and Rural Social Organization and points out the distinctions between them. Rural sociology as a science is stressed, for the subsequent chapters seek to give the student an understanding of sociological analysis which will enable him to give a more meaningful interpretation to rural life. It is held that the significance of any science is no greater than the methods of analysis of phenomena peculiar to it.

It is shown that the ultimate justification of all study of rural sociology as a science is in its use in programs for rural social organization, or the betterment of rural life. Rural social organization is dependent on it, but it is by no means only applied rural sociology, for the improving of rural society is an art, or a technology, involving many other fields of knowledge and organizational skills. The rela-

tions of rural sociology to the other social sciences, particularly its intimate relation with social psychology, are also pointed out.

Any program of social organization must necessarily presuppose certain aims, and if the methods of science are to be used to attain these ends, some definite criteria must be established whereby progress to the desired ends may be measured. A consideration of such criteria forms the third chapter, which deals with the values of human personality and the welfare of society (represented in group welfare and community welfare) as being interdependent and together forming the aims of any improvement in social organization.

With such a background the student is prepared to consider the environmental conditions affecting rural society, as described in Part II.

Chapter 1

TWO VIEWS OF RURAL SOCIETY

I. A NATURALISTIC APPROACH TO RURAL SOCIETY

When the naturalist studies animals he not only considers their physical structure and life processes, their anatomy and physiology, but he observes their relation to their environment and to each other. He finds that ants and bees live in nests; beavers have colonies; sea fowl congregate on shores, cliffs, and marshes; horses, cattle, buffalo, and other ruminants roam the plains in herds. The study of these forms of association is essential for the understanding of animal life and is one of the most interesting phases of natural history.

The naturalist follows the ants or bees to their nests, observes the different forms of nests, studies the structure of the colonies, their biological relationships and internal economy; he is able to recognize their forms of collective life by the structures in which they live. The study of the collective life of the human animal, man, is not so simple, because his life is not controlled alone by hereditary instincts; to a considerable degree it is the result of free association made possible by his ability to direct his behavior through abstract ideas which are the product of his ability to communicate through spoken and written language. Furthermore, the forms of association to which he is accustomed are so much a part of his mode of thought that it is difficult for him to see them as the naturalist does the ant colony.

Let us attempt to free ourselves of this subjective view of human collectivities by imagining that we approach the Earth by airship from some other planet and that we can observe the gross evidences of human life from the skies and then, with some sort of an apparatus for television, we may observe how the human animals behave toward each other within their colonies, just as the naturalist can observe the ants or bees in an artificial nest or hive.

HUMAN AGGREGATIONS. As we fly over the Earth we note that certain areas are in forest and others are cleared. In the clearings we can see small structures, houses, to and from which men are seen to go, as the ants to their nests, the same individuals going to the same

houses. In certain areas, as, for example, eastern France, southern Germany, India, and China, we observe that all the houses are clustered closely together into villages, from which the men go out to work the surrounding fields, and that the land belonging to each village is definitely delimited. In other regions, as in the United States and most of the British colonies, we find the houses scattered over the land, and observe that each family works the land immediately around its homestead. There also are aggregations of houses in villages, but few of their inhabitants go out to work the land. On the other hand, we observe that the men from the farm homes now and then go to the villages to carry their farm products, to bring from them articles purchased there, or merely to gather in the village for meeting together for various purposes. If we watch closely we see that the people from the individual farmhouses go mostly to a certain village, although now and then to another larger one, or to a more distant, larger aggregation of dwellings, stores, and factories—a city.

Cities. Here and there, at varying distances apart, we see the cities, larger aggregations not only of dwelling houses but also of areas of larger buildings, the stores and factories, to which the men and women go daily to work and from which they return to their homes at night. In some sections the cities are far apart, 100 to 300 or more miles; in the better agricultural regions they are more frequent, 30 to 50 miles apart; in the highly industrialized sections, along coastlines, they may be more thickly concentrated with only a few miles between them, so that the cities are the predominant feature of the landscape. We notice that from the cities radiate roads and railroads to the villages and other cities and that in and around the cities there is very little land cultivated by the people for food but that their food supplies and other raw products are brought from the surrounding country and from far and near by water and rail transportation. On the other hand, the products of the city factories are transported to other cities and villages where they are obtained by the farm people who thus secure their manufactured goods, farm machinery, furniture, manufactured clothing, and all the goods not produced locally. Thus the open country is the source of the food supply and of raw materials upon which the cities depend for their life. In this relationship is the primary distinction between rural and urban society, which becomes less definite and more complex as the region becomes more industrialized and the farm homes become more dependent upon city goods.

Open-Country Neighborhoods. In regions where cities are scarce and villages are far apart, or even in the more thickly settled sections

where topography makes access to the villages more difficult, we see church and school buildings in the open country, sometimes with half a dozen or a dozen or so houses scattered nearby. Possibly a store or the hall of some farmers' organization may form the center of such a cluster. To these institutions the people of the surrounding country, for a radius of one, two, or three miles, are seen to come more frequently than they go to the villages. Within this area the people associate more closely than they do with others outside it, even though for many of their common needs they go to the more distant village. Such an area we can distinguish as a rural neighborhood; it is the area of association most common in such sections as the southern Appalachian Highlands and much of the South, as it was throughout American colonies and the United States in the period of first settlement.

THE RURAL COMMUNITY. In the areas of dispersed farm homesteads we observe that roads have been built to the village centers, and between them and to the cities. If we observe closely, particularly in hilly sections or where the roads are unpaved, we may be able to see that at the edge of the area in which the farmers go to a given village the roads are poorer because less used, and in such cases we can actually see the limits of the area within which most of the farm people habitually go to a certain village center. This area, therefore, is one in which the people are seen to associate in the common village center more than they do elsewhere, and we recognize it as a rural community. In some regions with dense population the villages are near each other and the community areas are relatively small; in other, less densely populated regions they are farther apart and their community areas are less clearly defined. Some of the village aggregations are small, not more than twenty or thirty houses and three or four stores, whereas others may contain several hundred houses with scores of stores and public buildings.

VILLAGES. Within these villages we see not only dwelling houses, but also buildings containing goods of all sorts—stores—to which the farm people come daily to purchase their supplies. To other buildings of more ornate design, often surmounted by pointed spires or bearing crosses—the churches—the people come only one day a week, when they stop working on their farms and the stores are closed. To one building in the village—the school—all the village children come, five days in the week; in a considerable proportion of the larger villages we observe that the children from the farms are transported to this building by buses. Other buildings, or parts of buildings, are used only occasionally, when groups of people from village and country

meet in them for various purposes, but usually the same people come to these gatherings on the same days. Evidently they have some common interests or purposes which bring them together.

GROUPS. Were we to continue our study by carefully observing all these gatherings, we should find that some of the people go only to the church, others go only to the stores or the school, whereas others are found habitually attending many of the group meetings. We should find that each of these group gatherings is given a definite name by those attending it and that they recognize certain obligations to act together for the specified purposes of the given group. We should find that the members of some of these groups are also commonly members of certain other groups, whereas they rarely belong to some others. Thus there is a considerable proportion of common membership and consequent cooperation between some groups, whereas there is open competition or antagonism between others.

THE PHENOMENA OF SOCIOLOGY. As will be shown in more detail later, sociology consists of the description of these various forms of human association, in the family, the neighborhood, the community, the church, the school, and the various organizations and groupings found in any community. As the rural community includes the area within which most of rural group life is observed to occur, we would naturally seek to examine its associated life more closely, just as the naturalist studies the life of a beaver colony or other animal society. Were we able to visit these communities over a series of years and to observe their behavior without interfering with it we would be able to gain definite knowledge about it. This is just what is essential for the accurate description of the forms of association in rural areas, but as such a process is expensive in time and money, we shall have to content ourselves with descriptions of some fairly typical communities made by those who have lived in them and are intimately acquainted with their life. By studying these descriptions we may be in a better position to determine what uniformities and differences occur in the group life of rural communities under different conditions, what difficulties they meet, and under what circumstances they seem to function successfully. In examining the associated life of these rural areas we are interested in discovering the most common forms of association and how they are adjusted to each other and their environment, so that we may be in a position to formulate a plan for studying them more intensively and to determine upon what aspects of this associated life we shall concentrate our attention.

II. ANALYSIS OF RURAL COMMUNITIES

The case studies of the social organization of four rural communities, as presented in the Appendix, give us a good general picture of how people associate under rural conditions, and of some of the social problems which arise. Although in these descriptions a few individuals play a prominent role in the community life, and their influence is probably more important than revealed, for the most part the descriptions are concerned with various groups, organizations, and institutions; they deal with the forms of association. They reveal that there are many different kinds of groups; some are present in one place and absent in another; membership in some groups seems to affect membership in others; different groups include different classes of people, according to their several interests.

In order to sharpen our perception of these different kinds of association, the groups and activities in these four communities should be compared carefully by answering the questions in the following exercises, and other important differences and similarities should be noted.

EXERCISES

1. List the names of all the groups or forms of association mentioned in the four communities; place them in four parallel columns showing presence or absence.
2. Which are the most important groups found in all four communities?
3. How important is the neighborhood in the life of each of these communities?
4. What are the principal problems of group relationship in each of these communities?
5. How have changes in the means of communication affected the life and social organization of these communities?
6. What kinds of farmers' organizations exist in these communities?
7. Is there any one organization or institution which seems to be most important in all these communities?
8. What differences are there in the social stratification of these communities?
9. What effect does this have on group relations?
10. What were the chief factors in the integration and disintegration of each of these communities?
11. How have changes in economic conditions affected the life of these communities?
12. Which of these communities had the best church situation and which the poorest? Why?
13. Compare the recreation facilities of these communities.

14. What is the relative importance of the school in the life of each community?

15. What differences are there in the number and kind of social and civic organizations?

16. What are the predominant social attitudes of each community toward progress or improvement?

17. Compare the leadership in these communities.

18. List the community events in each community. To what extent do they indicate strong or weak communities?

19. Compare the extent to which contacts with other communities or the influence of outside agencies affect the life of each community.

The answer to these and similar questions will bring out many important points with regard to the ways in which rural people associate and the conditions affecting them. These studies do not give any detailed description of the differences in organization of the various groups mentioned, as it is assumed that the reader is fairly familiar with their structure and operation, but if we were to study these groups more carefully we would find that they are organized quite differently, that some resemble others whereas some are wholly different in nature. The Grange and the fraternal orders are secret; they have many officers and an elaborate ritual, wholly different from a ladies' aid society or a card club. Furthermore, the behavior of what seem to be rather similar kinds of groups varies widely; the Episcopalians may dance, but the Methodists are strongly opposed to dancing. Individual groups of the same kind differ as much as do different persons. The Parent-Teacher Association in one community is concerned only with the relation of home and school; in another it tends to become a community improvement society. We may also observe that the loyalty of individuals to groups and the influence of a group on the behavior of individuals vary from the strong loyalties to the family and the church to the casual adherence to a civic organization. We may also find that the behavior of many of these groups is strongly influenced by tradition and custom. The village pastor will not open his church or the school board will not open the school for the use of the young people because such a thing has never been done. Land owners and tenants do not mix in the South because of tradition. Changes in environmental conditions also affect the number, nature, objectives, and behavior of most groups.

People have been aware of these different groups and forms of associations for countless generations, for they have lived in families and communities, they have attended churches and belonged to various societies or clubs, and they have had to deal with the problems which

arise within these groups and among them, but their activities in groups have been mostly on a purely perceptual level, just as an animal lives in the natural environment. Only when we attempt to obtain general ideas—concepts—of the nature of the structure and behavior of these different groups, organizations, and institutions are we able to evaluate the efficiency with which they function and to understand the nature of their interrelations and the causes of their behavior. It is the purpose of sociology to obtain an understanding of groups and all forms of human association, with the hope that a knowledge of these phenomena may enable men to adjust their relationships better. The ultimate aim of sociology, as of all sciences, is to improve human welfare, but as a science it is primarily concerned with obtaining new knowledge of the phenomena with which it deals, with discovering facts which are hidden to ordinary common-sense observation, and with so relating these newly discovered facts as to make possible the prediction of the behavior of particular kinds of groups under given conditions or circumstances, so that we may be able to control them for the general welfare. The ultimate objective is human welfare, but if the scientific method is to contribute to this end, it must first study its phenomena and discover the unknown relations existing between them. Let us consider, therefore, the objectives and methods of rural sociology as a science, and its relation to rural social organization as a means of advancing the welfare of rural people.

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Chapter 2

THE RELATION BETWEEN RURAL SOCIOLOGY AND RURAL SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

For a study of the sociology and social organization of rural life, it is desirable that we first delimit our field of investigation by a definition of these terms. First, what is the field of sociology and social organization as applied to rural life; and, second, what do we include in the term *rural?*

1. RURAL SOCIOLOGY. Rural sociology is the sociology of life in the rural environment. Without reviewing the origins and development of rural sociology[1] it may be stated that most treatises on this subject have conceived it as a general description of rural life for promoting rural welfare or rural progress. This point of view was well stated by Dr. John M. Gillette in the first textbook on rural sociology:

> If by sociology is always meant a rigidly scientific attempt to account for group phenomena, and if, further, the attempt must be disassociated from utilitarian motives, then the title "rural sociology" is incompetent to express the scientific import of sociological studies of rural communities. But, for the same reasons, there are few treatises which may be called sociologies, and the newer works bearing that name are especially ineligible because they deal so largely with the solution of practical problems. If to treat rural life quite largely as a set of problems to be solved is unscientific, rural sociology at present cannot qualify for the scientific class. It arose out of a growing demand for the application of rational intelligence to the conditions obtaining in country districts, and its initial spirit and motive was thereby necessarily rendered practical and utilitarian. The great business of rural sociology is, and perhaps ever will be, the attainment of sympathetic understanding of the life of farming communities and the application to them of rational principles of social endeavor. But general sociology, at its best, is but a wrought-out structure of intellectual problems, and if rural sociology pursues its mission of understanding and solving in a rational manner the issues of rural life, it will become scientific, but will differ essentially from sociology in general by reason of its more restricted and immediate sphere. Its first

[1] For which see N. L. Sims, Elements of Rural Sociology, Chapter I.